

sermon study guide

Sermon Summary (see next page for discussion questions)

Fruitful: More Like Jesus - Gentleness

November 13/14, 2021

Pastor Kent Priebe

We tend to associate the word “gentleness” or “meekness” as being soft spoken, shy, and weak. Rather than wanting to be seen as such, most of us would rather be perceived as bold, courageous, and strong. However, gentleness is not about being weak. The Greek word used for gentleness in Galatians 5:22-23 is the word *Praus*. It describes an animal of immense strength that is submissive to its master. It is not about strength or power to show off, but it is strength controlled for the purpose of serving others. How then can we grow in meekness? We can do so by following Christ’s example in John 13: 1-15 – by being secure in our identity and by serving others.

In this passage, we read about Jesus washing the feet of His disciples. As part of the Jewish custom at that time, washing feet was a common courtesy offered to guests. Servants would wash the filthy feet of the guests. A host would not do this task himself as it would be beneath his dignity. We read in Luke 22, that on that same night as described in John 13, an argument broke out among the disciples regarding who the greatest among them was. Jesus heard the arguments, saw their proud hearts, and what did He do? The truly greatest One of them all – the Son of God – did what no one else in the room would have done. He got up and washed His disciples’ feet. This is a picture of true meekness.

We tend to be defined by what we do, by what others say about us, and by what we have. However, if we let ourselves be defined by these, we are unable to live in meekness. We will always want to be considered the greatest, and in the process, put others down to bring ourselves up. Even though we see a need, we would rather not serve in a role that we think is beneath our dignity. Instead, we hold on to our possessions, our power, our authority, and our influence.

Growing in meekness requires us to be secure in our own identity. From John 13:3, “Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under His power, and that He had come from God and was returning to God.” Indeed, throughout the Scriptures, we do not see Jesus ever questioning His identity. Similarly, we can be secure in our identity as children of God (1 John 3:1). Being defined by what He has done for us, what He says about us, and what He has given us will allow us to serve others in meekness.

Although Jesus knew that Judas would betray Him and that Peter would deny Him three times, He still washed their feet. Serving is not always easy. It may not be what we want to do or even imagine ever doing. Regardless, we are called to follow Jesus’ example and live a life of service to others (John 13:12-15).

May we grow in meekness by being secure in our identity as children of God and by serving others.

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Discussion Questions

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IN - PURSUE RELATIONSHIP

1. What do you think people's first impression of you is? Would their first impression be an accurate description of who you are?
2. One definition of gentleness/meekness is "strength and power under control for the purpose of serving others." Why might meekness be considered an unpopular character trait? Why is meekness vital in personal relationships, in the workplace and in society?

UP - PURSUE GOD

Read John 13:1-15

3. According to Jewish custom, guests would have their feet washed by a servant when they entered the home. Why did Jesus wash the feet of the disciples and why did He wait to do it during the meal?
4. Re-read verses 1, 3 and 11. Why is it significant that Jesus washed their feet in light of what He "knew" about Himself and what would happen?

OUT - PURSUE MISSION

Read 1 John 3:1a

5. We can grow in meekness by knowing who we truly are. What can keep us from living in our true identity? What steps can you take this week to grow in your identity as a child of God?
6. Pastor Kent mentioned that when you feel like you don't want to serve, it might be the very thing God is inviting you to do. Tell of a time when you saw someone step in, meekly, to meet a need. Where might you currently see a need that you are able to meet?

For Personal Reflection/Prayer:

Reflect on how you display meekness in your life: in personal relationships, work relationships and in your church community. We can grow in meekness by knowing our true identity (1 John 3:1) and by serving (John 13:1-15). Which of these do you need to grow in and what impact might this have on those around you?

THE WORD (NIV)

John 13:1-15

It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. 2 The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. 3 Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; 4 so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. 5 After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. 6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" 7 Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." 8 "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet."

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." 9 "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!" 10 Jesus answered, "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." 11 For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean. 12 When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. 13 "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. 14 Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. 15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

1 John 3:1a

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!